



musawah

For Equality in the Family

Musawah Vision

an update on Musawah issues and activities

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present the first issue of Musawah Vision, a quarterly update on Musawah issues and activities.

The update will provide critical news, insights and analysis from Musawah people on family law issues and practices, as well as key movement and knowledge building strategies across regions for action and reform.

In this newsletter, you'll find current trends in recent family law developments across the regions, news about our knowledge building and movement building activities as well as an update of what we have been doing at the secretariat. You'll also find updates on family law advocacy and reform on the national and regional level by Musawah's focal points, news about Musawah's recent international advocacy on family law issues, as well as an introduction to the Musawah team and what we have been doing at the secretariat.

We hope that you will find this resource a useful tool to contribute to the strategic discourse, thinking and action on family law issues and practices as well as a tool to share experiences and create linkages among activists engaged in this issue. Please send us your feedback and updates on musawah@musawah.org to include in our next issue!

I. Trends in Family Law

1. New family laws passed with gains for women, but full implementation compromised as Islamist opposition and traditional ulama resist reform

Long term advocacy efforts for family law reform by women's rights group have only seen partial success as there has been a step back from full implementation due to opposition. In countries like Bahrain and Mali, opposition from traditional ulama threatened violence and nationwide protests.

Bahrain: A new family law for Sunnis that protects the rights of women in *Shari'ah* courts was approved by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on May 27, [IPS](#) reported on June 5. Bahrain's Shiites were excluded from any legislation in February after hard line scholars and lawmakers from the Shiite community threatened action, including nationwide protests and rallies, claiming fears the new legislation is a step in granting civil law jurisdiction over *Shari'ah* courts. Women activists have pledged to continue their fight for a just law for the Gulf kingdom's Shiites.

For the complete article go to: <http://globalgeopolitics.net/wordpress/2009/06/05/religion-new-family-law-for-sunni-women-in-bahrain-not-for-shiites>

Mali: The President of Mali had to return the recently passed progressive Muslim Family Code back to Parliament for further review and to gain more public support before he signs it into

law. Under the new law, women would no longer be required to obey their husbands; instead, husbands and wives owe each other loyalty and protection. Women would receive greater inheritance rights, and the minimum age for girls to marry in most circumstances would be raised to 18. In the capital Bamako, hundreds of religious and village leaders gathered in opposition to the code, with other demonstrations against the law across the country.

For the complete article go to: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8223736.stm>

Yemen: The Yemeni Parliament tried in February to pass a law that would have set the minimum marriage age at 17 years, but conservative parliamentarians kept it from reaching the president by arguing that it violates *Shari'ah*, which does not stipulate a minimum age.

For the complete article go to:

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/09/16/yemen.girl.childbirth/index.html>

2. Challenges to existing progressive laws

Islamic resurgence in many Muslim countries has led to new challenges to progressive family laws. While this has been happening in a number of Muslim countries over the years, the most recent developments in Syria and Tunisia are a cause for concern. Women's groups remain vigilant in mobilising public opinion and lobbying to resist such regressive trends.

Tunisia: An appeal to re-legalise the banned practice of polygamy is stirring controversy in Tunisia, particularly among women who fear the erosion of all of their social gains. Tunisia has erupted in debate over a call to re-legalise polygamy as an 'Islamic solution' to social problems such as extramarital affairs and unhappy spinsterhood. Polygamy was rejected in Tunisia even before the 1956 Code of Personal Status, but in the context of Tunisia's religious resurgence, the issue is being debated again.

For the complete article go to:

www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/08/14/feature-01

Syria: A campaign to halt proposed changes to Syria's personal status code is being hailed as a milestone for the country's civil society movement. Rights activists are celebrating a successful campaign to freeze proposed changes to the country's personal status code which they say would have reversed years of hard fought advances for women's rights.

For the complete article go to: <http://www.syria-today.com/index.php/august-2009/377-society/2443-personal-status-matters>

3. Women's groups engaging with religious texts and religious leaders and *Shari'ah* legal experts and religion to push for advances in family law

Bahrain: For the first time, feminists in Bahrain are seeking new Islamic perspectives on gender and women's empowerment and asking for modern interpretations of the Qur'an. Through a series of four workshops launched in May, the Bahrain Women Association for Development intends to engage the public in serious debate over the 'true meaning' of Qur'anic verses that are used to assert male supremacy.

For the complete article go to: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=48205>

Nigeria: A meeting organized by the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) to validate its research findings on women and Muslim family law has seen unprecedented attention from high ranking officials, chief judges and *Shari'ah* experts.

These public figures attended a meeting to discuss harmful traditional practices embedded in Muslim family law. The research was conducted in seven states in the North West zone of Nigeria and focused on six often contentious issues in Muslim family law practice in Northern Nigeria: forced marriages, divorce, maintenance of wife, post divorce maintenance, custody and child maintenance.

To read more about the meeting go to: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200908140422.html>

To read more about the research go to: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200909210380.html>

4. Other family law developments

Uganda: A new bill on marriage and divorce would ban widow inheritance, a common practice in Uganda where a widow is 'inherited' by her deceased husband's relative, usually a brother-in-law. The proposed bill also allows women to divorce their husbands when the latter are permanently impotent. The new bill, which will be tabled in Parliament soon, further outlaws forced marriages, makes bride price non-refundable and puts the age of marriage at 18 years. The average age girls marry in Uganda is currently 17.9.

For the complete article go to: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/12/696002>

Afghanistan: Afghanistan has quietly passed a law permitting Shia men to deny their wives food and sustenance if they refuse to obey their husbands' sexual demands, despite international outrage over an earlier version of the legislation which President Hamid Karzai had promised to review. The new final draft of the legislation also grants guardianship of children exclusively to their fathers and grandfathers, and requires women to get permission from their husbands to work.

For the complete article go to: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/14/afghanistan-womens-rights-rape>

II. Building Our Knowledge

Malaysia – polygamy: Sisters in Islam's latest national research initiative entitled 'Impact of Polygamy on the Family among Muslims in Malaysia' is the first of its kind. The research looks at the financial, social and emotional impacts of polygamy on the family. SIS staff, members, academics and women activists formed the research team, which interviewed husbands and their first wives and subsequent wives, as well as children of both first and second wives, in four regions of peninsular Malaysia. To date, over 1000 respondents have been interviewed and a number of focus groups have been conducted.

For more information go to:

http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=707&Itemid=274

<http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2009/9/12/lifefocus/4682228&sec=lifefocus>

Morocco – implementing law reforms: In February 2004, Morocco was praised for significant progress in the field of women's rights, particularly for revising its 1958 family code, the 'Moudawana'. This reform was the result of many years of work between academics, theologians, activists and legal experts. Five years later, it's time to assess whether this praise was warranted.

For the complete article go to:

<http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=25395&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0>

Maghreb – using marriage contracts to increase rights in marriage: The Global Rights Maghreb field office, in collaboration with fifteen local NGOs and lawyer partners in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, has announced the publication of a Discussion Booklet on the strategic use of the marriage contract to promote women’s rights. Designed as a practical tool for grassroots mobilisation by local NGOs and facilitators, the Discussion Booklet contains information on clauses that can be stipulated in a marriage contract, reasons for drafting a detailed contract, simplified explanations of national laws and marriage procedures, a *Model Marriage Contract*, and three human rights education program sessions to use in awareness-raising among women.

For more information go to: <http://globalrightsmaghreb.wordpress.com/>

Kuwait – *qiwamah* and the constitution: A new victory achieved by Kuwaiti women is the historical judgment issued by the Supreme Constitutional Court in Kuwait which granted women the right to issue independent passports for themselves without stipulating the husband’s approval. The judgment thereby renders unconstitutional Article 15 of Law 1962 which forbids women to be given independent passports without their husbands approval. The court considered freedom of movement as an essential right of every person.

To read more please visit:

<http://www.womengateway.com/arwg/News/2009/Oct/news5679.htm>

III. Building Our Movement

Short Course on Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective 3-16 August 2009 Cyberjaya, Malaysia

‘The course was more than a breath of fresh air to the mind and the heart, it felt more like a journey bringing you finally back home.

What I felt was so empowering was that the course did not provide participants with merely new knowledge but also empowering them on how to find this new knowledge and how to analyse it. In that sense it was not a new version of what Islam says about women’s rights, but a rich humbling experience of being exposed to so many sincere efforts by so many scholars in trying to understand and work with the dynamism in Islamic legal tradition.

I left the course with a strong feeling of gratitude that studying Islamic legal tradition can be so empowering and liberating.’

- Reflections by a Short Course participant -

The first Short Course on Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective was held in August 2006 at the Bellagio Study and Conference Centre in Bellagio, Italy. This course was the result of the many years of engagement between Sisters In Islam and women’s rights activists who felt the urgent need to better understand Islam in order to adequately address the rising challenges of religious conventionalism and extremism as they adversely impact human rights and the rights of women in their countries and throughout the Muslim world.

The main objectives of the short course were two-fold. Firstly, to understand the dynamic interaction between Qur’an and Shari’ah and the rights framework. Secondly, to explore possibilities and strategies for reform within the Islamic framework.

The second Short Course was recently held in Cyberjaya, Malaysia from 3-16 August 2009. The objectives of the course remained, with the goal that by the end of the 2 weeks, participants would be able to:

- Come to an understanding of the ‘traditional/patriarchal’ modes of knowledge production in Islamic law;
- Be introduced to the reformist/egalitarian modes of knowledge production; and
- Develop arguments and strategies to advance (in their own contexts) a rights-based argument that is also grounded by Islam.

In the first week of the course, the participants were introduced to the science and methodology of the texts (Qur’an and *Hadith*), followed by sessions on the Construction of *Fiqh* in the Formative Period of Islam and the Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought. Following this was a session on Juristic Principles on Tools for Law Reform in order to deduce new knowledge and understanding from Islamic sources for reaching new solutions to problems.

The second week began with the session on Islam Beyond Patriarchy: The Tauhidic Paradigm for Reform and Women’s Ways of Knowing. This was followed by sessions introducing participants to research work that is currently in progress on the concepts of *qiwamah* (authority) and *wilayah* (guardianship), and the use of one of the juristic principles for law reform in the twenty-first century, that is *maqasid al-Shari’ah* (objectives of the *Shari’ah*). The remainder of the course was concentrated on looking at strategies for reform and advocacy, including the use of the Musawah Framework for Action.

The course was attended by 24 participants from 17 countries (Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, The Gambia, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan and UK).

Resource persons included Professor Amina Wadud (United States) and Dr. Nur Rofiah (Indonesia) who led the sessions related to the Qur’an. The sessions on *hadith* and the construction of *fiqh* were led by Professor Khalid Masud (Pakistan), Professor Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran/United Kingdom) and Mr. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir (Indonesia). Aside from the resource persons, the course was facilitated by Lies Marcoes-Natsir (Indonesia), Professor Rashidah Shuib (Malaysia) and Norhayati Kaprawi (Malaysia).

The course generated much interest from various regions and the next step forward is to conduct a Training of Trainers, in order for this course to be conducted in other countries and in other languages.

What participants had to say:

‘Excellent for many reasons: the content, the diversity of the activities: lecture, group discussions, case studies, brainstorming, burning questions, film, etc..... This short course changes all my vision about the Qur’an and *hadith* and aroused my interest for Islamic studies. In addition I feel now comfortable to engage in debate with conservative groups.’

‘A very informative course which has given me skills and confidence to advance the cause of Muslim women’s rights from a feminist perspective.’

IV. News from Musawah Regional Focal Points

1. The Gulf Region

Focal point: Bahrain Women's Union (bahwu@batelco.com.bh)

Bahrain

Bahrain finally passed its long awaited family law in July 2009. The law, which is the first codification of family issues, only governs the Sunni sect in Bahrain. The law is seen to be a positive step towards the protection of the family and the children. While it upholds the role of the guardian (*wali*), it requires the consent of the woman to enter a marriage, regardless of her age, and also forbids the *wali* from preventing the marriage of a woman without a legitimate reason. The law also gives women the right to prohibit their husbands from taking additional wives. Witnesses are no longer required to prove harm in divorce matters.

The Bahrain Women's Union (BWU) will be monitoring personal status cases in the Sunni Shari'ah courts beginning a few months after the implementation of the new law. The BWU is now embarking on awareness raising programs around the newly passed law. This awareness program, launched during Ramadan, included daily competitions in local newspapers around different aspects of the law, in addition to continuous awareness raising lectures. BWU has also started discussions with religious leaders around passing a family law specifically for the Shia sect in Bahrain.

Qatar and United Arab Emirates

New family laws were passed in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates as government initiatives with no engagement or intervention from civil society organisations.

2. The Middle East and North Africa

Focal Point: Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA)
(info@cewla.org; <http://www.cewla.org>)

Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine

As part of a regional project to reform personal status laws in four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine), several organisations in the four countries are in the process of advocating for a proposed draft personal status law based on human rights and societal concepts. In Egypt, this is a continuation of CEWLA's ongoing project since 2003 of pushing for more justice for Muslim and Christian women with regard the Egyptian personal status laws.

The broader goals of the regional project are ending discrimination and violence against women in the social and cultural spheres of these four countries and strengthening NGOs on the national and regional level to build a strategy advocating for a legal framework that guarantees equality between men and women. The project looks specifically at discriminatory articles in the laws in these four countries relating to divorce, custody and *wilayah* (guardianship).

Activities have included:

1. A study on the economic and psychological impact of divorce, which came out with a number of recommendations, including:

- Laws need to reflect the changing realities in society, especially those relating to women and their participation in providing for the family financially. This is an entry point to change the legal philosophy that demands women's obedience in return for being provided for financially.
 - The costs of divorce can be decreased by introducing legal amendments that reduce litigation periods.
2. A study on the status of women in Muslim law with regard to six main issues: guardianship (*wilayah* and *wisayah*), *qiwamah*, women as witnesses, divorce in absence of the wife and polygamy.
 3. A study on the social impact of divorce on the family in Egypt by CEWLA. This study revealed that the social and psychological motives behind marriage and building families do not support an insistence on the preservation of marriages that have failed. The research found that couples sometimes rush into marriage are often not prepared for the responsibilities of marriage, viewing it as an experiment that might or might not fail.

Egypt

CEWLA is playing a lead role in integrating the Musawah Framework for Action and its principles and approach in the CEDAW process, especially in the upcoming January 2010 CEDAW session in which Egypt will be reporting. For this purpose, CEWLA is working within the Egyptian CEDAW coalition to familiarise NGOs who are part of the coalition with the Musawah Framework for Action and how it can be used to push governments to realise their commitments to CEDAW, especially around Article 16 of CEDAW.

3. The Horn of Africa

Focal point: Musawah Sudan (mahaelzein@yahoo.com, manalabdel@gmail.com)

Sudan

In April 2009, a group of organisations working on legislative reform and violence against women held a consultation meeting to launch Musawah Sudan, identify its goals and set its structure.

Musawah Sudan identified the production, collection and dissemination of research, case studies, testimonies and surveys as a priority in order to initiate a discussion on the impact of the personal status law on the Muslim family in Sudan and in the region. This is consistent with the Musawah strategic priority of knowledge building.

As part of their movement building goals, Musawah Sudan is aiming to promote strategies to push for gender equality in Muslim families through workshops, symposiums and lectures.

The first activity Musawah Sudan conducted was a one-day discussion on marriage contracts and possibilities for reform. This was organised by Musawah Sudan committee members and attended by various women's and human rights organisations in Sudan. The director of the Mutawinat group¹ highlighted the historical background of the Sudanese marriage contract (Gassima), along with the definition of marriage and other provisions in the Gassima contract.

¹ Mutawinat is an Arabic name meaning 'cooperating women'. Mutawinat is working in the field of legal advocacy and its mission is to create a better system to ensure women's and children's legal rights in Sudan.

The most important outcomes from this discussion were identification of the absence of a gender dimension in the personal status law in general and in the marriage contract specifically and the need to conduct surveys and learn from other countries' successful family law reforms (such as the Moroccan experience) to identify effective intervention approaches.

Member organisations of Musawah Sudan have also been conducting other family law reform activities, such as the campaign to codify the age of marriage for girls at 18, conducted by the Sudanese Organization for Research & Development (SORD)², and its upcoming two year project on drafting an alternative personal status law in Sudan. The research, consultation and subsequent drafting will be launched this month in addition to a collection of testimonies from women in three different states who have been negatively affected by the current personal status law.

4. Southeast, South and Central Asia

Focal point: Alimat (Musawah Indonesia) (alimat@yahoo.com)

Indonesia

On 15 October 2009, Musawah Indonesia launched its existence to the Indonesian public in Jakarta. The group, named 'Alimat' ('knowledgeable women') is comprised of nine member organisations (including mass-based ones) and 21 individual members (including academics from both Islamic and secular universities). The meeting was launched by Professor Dr. Narasuddin Umar, General Director of Muslim Advisory, Department of Religious Affairs. The First Lady of Indonesia, Ani Yudhoyono, had been invited to launch the meeting but could not attend due to a busy schedule.

Founded on 12 May 2009 as a movement for justice in Indonesian Muslim families, Alimat has been particularly active around the significant amendments in the family law and the legalisation of Hudud Law in Aceh. While these amendments are still in the process of codification, Alimat has been organising around them due to their important implications for women's rights in the family. One of the most important amendments is the replacement of the implementing authority of the family law from the religious courts under the Department of Religious Affairs to the courts under the Department of Law and Human Rights, which are accessible to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

According to Alimat, the draft amendments are still gender-biased, as the *wali* (guardian) is still a requirement for the marriage contract and no sanctions are stipulated against a *wali* who forces a woman to get married or marries off a woman at an early age. There is also no sanction against men who leave their families without providing for them financially.

Access to *khul'* by the court is subjected to men's approval, and only men can be witnesses to marriages. While polygamy is only admissible by the court's decision, the court can allow it against the wife's will. Amendments related to polygamy were also problematic because the prerequisite of being just to all wives was not accompanied by practical steps such as providing equal housing, etc., but merely by promising to be just.

These amendments are problematic because they do not take into account the fact that millions of families in Indonesia are headed by women due to the refusal by husbands to

² SORD works to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations. Through research, informed advocacy and knowledge, it contributes to empowering Sudanese people to actively enjoy their rights as responsible citizens.

provide financially or the absence of husbands. They also ignore the fact that millions of women in Indonesia must go abroad for years to work as maids and provide for the family, leaving their husband and children at home.

Alimat is planning the following activities:

1. Host the regional ASEAN Workshop on State Adoption and Non-state Promotion of *Shari'ah* Law in Southeast Asia: Impact on women's rights in November 2009.
2. Organise a national meeting on Hudud Law in Aceh in November 2009.
3. Arrange a meeting with national policy makers (led by Komnas Perempuan, the National Commission on Violence Against Women).
4. Create a training module on Keluarga Sakinah (harmonious families) from a gender justice perspective (led by NGOs Rahima and Fatayat).

To learn more about the launch of Alimat, please visit:

<http://thejakartaglobe.com/national/indonesian-womens-organizations-unite-in-new-group/335603>

5. Sub-Saharan Africa

Focal point: Musawah Nigeria (asmaujoda@hotmail.com)

Nigeria

Musawah Nigeria began mobilising NGOs and the public in Nigeria around family law issues and Musawah prior to the Musawah Global Meeting through a series of national consultations. Based on these consultations, a group of NGOs came together to form Musawah Nigeria including Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria, BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights and the Centre for Women and Adolescent Empowerment.

The group has successfully registered Musawah Nigeria as an independent body and is planning two projects. The first is a research/mapping project on NGOs that work on equality and justice in the family so as to identify the existing literature on this and the knowledge gaps and needs of Muslim women. Musawah Nigeria is also planning to work around the Child Rights Act in Nigeria, which is a bill to protect children that can be used as a strong tool to stop child labour and early marriage. Musawah Nigeria will mobilise public and official support around this bill through lobbying and raising awareness of its content.

V. International Advocacy

A proposed new CEDAW General Recommendation on the Economic Consequences of Marriage and its Dissolution

On 4 August 2009, Musawah presented a [statement](#) at the 44th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) during a Day of General Discussion on a proposed General Recommendation on the Economic Consequences of Marriage and its Dissolution.

This General Recommendation, for which a concept note was drafted and presented at the 44th Session, will include such topics as the monetary aspects of marriage formation, administration and management of property gained during marriage, division of property upon divorce, inheritance, and protection of women's economic rights in polygamous relationship.

The Musawah Perspective

Musawah's brief intervention, based on the longer statement that was submitted to the Committee along with the Musawah [Framework for Action](#) and two Musawah publications ([Wanted](#) and [Home Truths](#)), focused on women's economic rights within Muslim family laws. The statement highlighted the fact that many Muslim family laws are discriminatory with regard to women's rights in marriage and on its dissolution, and such discrimination often has immediate economic consequences for women. Of additional concern is that Muslim family laws are often used as a focal point for opportunistically mobilising political support. Many governments declare that Muslim family laws cannot be changed because they are divine or based on the Qur'an. Musawah submitted that the teachings of the Qur'an, the objectives of the *Shari'ah*, universal human rights standards, constitutional guarantees, and the realities of Muslim women's and men's lives, all demand that relations between Muslim women and men be governed by principles and practices that uphold equality, fairness and justice.

Musawah Recommendations

Musawah made six specific recommendations for the Committee's consideration in developing the proposed general recommendation:

- (a) All States parties should enable the development of laws and practices that recognise in theory and in practice equality between women and men in family laws.
- (b) States parties should take all possible measures to uphold international norms and standards regarding marriage.
- (c) States should support open and inclusive public debate regarding diversity of opinion and interpretations of religious laws and principles relating to family laws.
- (d) States should ensure improved access to justice for women, especially in matters related to marriage and divorce.
- (e) States should maintain statistical data regarding the paid and unpaid economic contribution of women's labour to the household and the prevalence of female-headed households.
- (f) The United Nations, the international community and States parties should recognise and support the women and men who are engaging in processes of reform of family laws and protection of existing rights in ways that take into account religious values and universal human rights and that move the family towards relationships of equality and justice.

Musawah plans to continue to engage with the CEDAW Committee and individual Committee members to discuss the Musawah principles within the context of CEDAW.

For a summary of the 44th CEDAW Session and the meeting on the proposed General Recommendation on the Economic Consequences of Marriage and its Dissolution, see the [ISHR Treaty Body Monitor on the 44th CEDAW Session](#).

VI. Musawah Secretariat

1. Here's the Secretariat team!

We are delighted to introduce to you the team that forms the Musawah Secretariat, who you can contact at any time at musawah@musawah.org:

Zainah Anwar, Musawah Project Director: Zainah works to promote Musawah at the national and international levels, responds to knowledge and capacity building needs of groups and individuals linked through Musawah, and leads the planning committee and organisational development of Musawah.

Rozana Isa, Musawah Coordinator: Rozana oversees the overall planning, implementation and smooth running of programmes and activities under Musawah.

Hadil El-Khouly, Musawah Program Officer for Outreach: Hadil reaches out to all national, regional and thematic Musawah groups to facilitate their interaction with the movement. This includes working with them to assess challenges and needs, disseminate information about their activities, respond to requests and provide support to sustain the focal points with the aim of promoting knowledge and movement building. Hadil also coordinates the Young Women's Caucus.

Cassandra Balchin, Musawah Communications Coordinator: Cassandra leads the development and implementation of Musawah's communications work which aims to contribute effectively to Musawah knowledge-building, movement-building and international advocacy.

Jana Rumminger, Musawah Researcher: Jana develops and builds content for Musawah publications and the website and assists with report writing.

2. Musawah website

The [Musawah website](#) was launched during the February 2009 Global Meeting with 64 individual pages, 114 downloadable documents, and 30 high-resolution photos for media use. The site has six main sections, and subsections within most of these. '[About Musawah](#)' and '[Musawah Framework](#)' contain information about the movement and links to the PDF versions of the Framework in [English](#), [Arabic](#), [French](#), [Persian](#), and [Malay](#). '[Equality is Necessary](#)' provides information about the family law situation in [30 countries](#), links to [family laws](#), and [life stories](#). '[Equality is Possible](#)' contains [background papers](#), [arguments](#) supporting equality in family laws and practices, and [links](#) to organisations and resources on family law reform. A '[Press Room](#)' section and the '[2009 Global Meeting](#)' section contain information for the press and document the Global Meeting itself. A Video and Photo Gallery at the bottom of the [home page](#) has photos from the Global Meeting.

Some highlights of the website include:

- **Musawah Global Meeting [Opening](#) and [Closing Videos](#):** The [Opening Video](#) depicts the roots of Musawah – the decades of activism that have led to reforms in Muslim family laws and practices – and why equality in the family is possible today. The [Closing Video](#) documents the Global Meeting. Both videos can be used by women's organisations and activists in presentations and meetings as dynamic ways to show the work being done around the world to push for equality in the family.
- ***Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family***: [PDFs and summaries](#) of all of the chapters of this book are provided. French and Arabic versions of the chapters will be added soon.
- **Musawah [Resource Kit](#)**: A toolkit providing arguments for equality in Muslim family laws and practices from 4 approaches: Islamic jurisprudence, universal human rights,

national laws and constitutions, and the lived realities of families today. Examples from different countries' laws are also included.

- **Other Resources:** This section includes links to [organisations, coalitions and networks](#) that are affiliated with Musawah; resources on [Islamic sources](#) and on [international and regional human rights](#); and [additional articles and resources](#) relevant to advocating for equality and justice in the family. Links to three new publications (in English, French and Spanish) were recently added from the [Association for Women's Rights in Development](#) (AWID) [Resisting and Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms](#) initiative: [Shared Insights: Women's Rights Activists Define Religious Fundamentalisms](#); [Religious Fundamentalisms on the Rise: A Case for Action](#); and [Exposed: Ten Myths about Religious Fundamentalisms](#).

Please visit the website and provide feedback to musawah@musawah.org.

3. Communications Strategy Meeting

The Musawah Communications Advisory Group (CAG) met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 18-20 October to discuss and finalise the Musawah communication strategy. The CAG discussed principles, key messages and communications priorities and activities that will contribute to Musawah's visibility, outreach and raising Musawah issues nationally and globally.